Shifting Waters: Captain Lars, Awkward Kipo, and Apta's Experimental Space-Time Rift
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by lefemmerouge

Summary

Captain Lars and the Off Colors are accidentally sucked across the plains of space-time into a new world, involving them in a clash they hadn't prepared for. In the process, they meet the crew of the Pascal Magi, an all-female cruiser, and learn about this new, strange world. In another part of the universe, Glimmer adjusts to Las Vistas and her new friends, like Kipo, with their connection hovering between friendship and romance. Apta tests her new cross-dimensional rift machine. Catra is a willing subject. She wants to see Adora and confess her true feelings toward her. Bow continues visiting his dads, George and Lance, and Angella, at the archives in Mystacor. All these stories portend shifting waters ahead, in unique ways for each of these characters...

Notes

Pappy is used as a nickname for Padparascha, OCAC is the acronym for the Off Colors Astral Cruiser, Rhodo stands for Rhodonite, and RT stands for Rutile Twins. Also, Apta is used in this story rather than Entrapta and Fuma rather than Perfuma.

Comments are welcome and appreciated.

Update #1 on 2/8/24: I divided this fic into chapters to prepare it for posting on Squidge World, which will happen this year at some point. I also changed the rating from General Audiences to Teen and Up, as I felt it was more appropriate to be that rating.

Update #2 on 3/14/24: This fic has been cross-posted on Squidge World, chapter by chapter, with revisions to the summary, end-note, and text to make it flow better, including adding italics in key places. If you wish to read the original text, which does not have those changes, you can still do so on Wattpad.

See the end of the work for more notes

Chapter 1: Facing the Pascal Magi

The *Pascal Magi* churned across choppy seas, preparing its guns and missiles for battle. A hypercane had artificially formed in the Western part of the Pacific Ocean. The "Grand Roar," as some called it, had caused climate alteration across this world for the last half-century. As a result, countless countries had been flooded, with navigation and shipping becoming important once more. In this world, the warship was a part of an international company named Haru-Nico. Companies such as Haru-Nico had set up their own private forces to counter "terrorists," which organized themselves as "pirates," in order to protect their investments from the ravages of war. As the ship's Nav-Staff OS battle system prepared numerous armaments to attack the adjacent pirate fleet, the unforeseen occurred. They were flabbergasted.

The *OCAC* came out of the wormhole. Its laser cannons fired at full strength. Green lasers whizzed across the sky and slammed into the enemy ship, causing it to split apart, and sin into the water. This stunned those on the *Pascal Magi*. They did not expect this new combatant, and felt it was unwelcome. Nanaha Misaki, an unyielding brown-haired and blue-eyed woman with cream-colored skin, captain of this all-female private escort ship, mounted herself at the ship's helm. Staring out the window on the ship's bridge, in the vessel's bulwarks, she confidently barked an order to her fellow shipmates, some stationed in the cockpit.

"Manatsu, Mashu! Attempt to contact that unidentified craft. We need to know what their business is in these waters prior taking *any* action."

Mashu giggled and held her earpiece tightly. "Aye, shorty! Can do, Captain!"

Her sister Manatsu then chimed in. She hoped to show her value, once more. "I'll observe them for you, Captain, following the lead of my dear Mashu."

Nanaha grinned and twirled her hair. Everything was going as she had expected. "Thanks for your assistance. Both of you, keep the weapons charged." She walked away from the bridge after finishing her short conversation with them.

Lars gazed in confusion and shuddered. He hadn't expected to see a greyish vessel below. It had an antenna, a pad in the aft which contained a catapult, on the flight deck. It could send forward one or two aircraft if needed. It also had two surface-to-air missile launchers, a radar boom, and turrets in the forecastle. Other elements indicated the cruiser's offensive nature, such as rope cleats, rigging, gangways, hawsers, or the curved bow shape, making it suited for water travel. There didn't appear to be a crow's nest, a gangplank, nor a figurehead, which often appeared on wooden ships. Some vessels had funnels which let out smoke or steam. The *Pascal Magi* did not have this feature. The ship's overall configuration limited available deck space for a promenade deck or sun deck, especially with the outrigger and developed superstructure.

Due to the waterline, he couldn't see the two gigantic rudders, on the bilge, behind two propellers. They were massive constantly rotating blades and supported the keel. Both were part of the reddish-painted hull. The boat had a bay which contained onboard technology, crew's cabins, a galley, a saloon, a sickbay, a wardroom, and other materials in the stowage. A brig could even be fashioned for possible prisoners if ever necessary. In case of any kind of emergency, there were some escape hatches and a muster station, and other accommodating features.

Abruptly the communicator on the *OCAC* crackled with activity. They heard Manatsu loud and clear, sending them a very firm warning message. "This is the *Pascal Magi*. Please identify yourself *immediately*."

Rhodonite shuttered and gulped anxiously, unsure of how to react. About to stammer, Lars whispered to her, reassuring her. She then replied assertively. She put her hands around her mouth in order to amplify it, stridently speaking into the communicator at the same time. "We are the Off Colors Astral Cruiser (OCAC), containing ambassadors from the planet Earth. Some space disturbance threw us off course. It is not our intention to interfere. Having fulfilled your entreaty, our ship *shall be leaving* and going to another planetary system."

Proud of herself, Lars, the Rutile Twins, and her other compatriots, congratulated her for standing her ground. This 'victory' ended up being euphoric. The blond pigtailed and pale white-skinned girl, Manatsu, who happened to be the gunner of the *Pascal Magi* and person in charge of the ship's communications, decided to play a trick on them.

She giggled, twirling her hair with her index finger, beginning her 'attack' of sorts. "Oh, you are going to play hard to get, are you now?," she began. She then continued. "That's convenient. You resemble a chicken whose head has been cut off. Weak, disoriented, and pathetic. That’s what you are."

Her sister, Mashu, with the same skin color and longer blonde hair, joined in, guffawing in the background. This interaction confounded Lars and those on his craft, including the Rutile Twins and Rhodonite. Pappy moved close by the craft's communicator, slanting herself in its direction. Before any of them could stop her from uttering a word, she began speaking vociferously. "I foresee that we will hear from two mischievous sisters hankering to ruffle our feathers. Oh, my, what a calamity!"

Mashu and Manatsu were dumbfounded, uncertain of what to do. Neither Sango Fukami, who headed the engine room, Tsubasa Watatsumi, a ship pilot, and Hyousuke Nagimiya, the systems engineer, had any ideas either. Neither did Mihara Kairi, a very smart young girl who developed the Nav-Staff OS battle system for ship, Mitori Shimabara, the ship’s physician, Tanya L. Kojima, ship's Vice-Captain, or Clio Aquanaut, the weapons chief. Nanaha moaned. Not once as captain had she encountered *such a dilemma*.

Often cold, professional, and serious, she intensely cared about her fellow shipmates. She knew that her ship had IR scanners, a defensive weapons system resembling a machine gun called CIWS, anti-ship missiles (Alfals), anti-aircraft missiles (Eptams), and an ECM buoy equipped with radio jamming. She doubted that the unidentified craft engaged in piracy, making it 'illegal,' because it had single-highhandedly sunk the pirate ship. She knew that not taking a stand would make those back at Haru-Nico brand them as the 'Alice Brand,' a sexist

label applied to their vessel. As their last mission had been a routine one, the *Oliver*, a commercial escort boat, part of their same company, wasn't with them, a unique circumstance defying normal operating procedures.

Holding back her waterworks, something she expressed when her shipmates acted dangerously on her behalf or a situation put her in danger, she spoke into the communicator assertively. She held her hands down by her hips. Back on the *OCAC*, her strident voice caught Lars and the Off Colors off guard. Her amount of commitment astounded them. It contrasted from their experience on the second Earth with the vast floating fleet of humans called Gargantia.

"I'm Nanaha Misaki, captain of the *Pascal Magi*. I don't know what your deal is, but this is *our turf* and we don't need anyone else here. If you try to leave, we will shoot you down from the sky. Rather than fighting, let's talk. I won't use force unless it is absolutely necessary."

Considering this as a direct message to him, Lars crept nearer to the communicator, speaking with her on a captain-to-captain basis. He anticipated this would quiet tensions and lead to a more respectable conversation. He sat down in front of the device in a practiced meditative pose. "Miss Mistaki, as my friend, Rhodonite, told you earlier, we accidentally arrived here. I apologize for Pappy, who announces events after they come to pass. I accept your proposal to talk on your vessel. As emissaries from Earth, we desire to learn all we can. Please tell us where to land."

Nanaha accepted Lars' humility. She ordered her fellow shipmates to transmit landing instructions to the *OCAC*. A little later, the spaceship landed on the *Pascal Magi*'s flight deck, somehow fitting snugly between the two technologically advanced aircraft, which were often not used in fighting.

Boldly striding out of the *OCAC*, Lars marched forward, telling his comrades to stay behind, while he would scope out the situation. This made them edgy. Even so, they accepted his reasoning, due to their trust in him as their captain. One woman with creamy white skin and dark black hair, and wearing her professional naval uniform, and sporting a pair of glasses, welcomed him. This was Vice-Captain Tanya, loyal to Captain Nanaha. They had a shared history. She saw Nanaha as more of a friend than a boss. Both had gone to the Naval Academy at the same time. When she became drunk, she would fight with Mitori, the physician on board, and became possessive of Nanaha. She rotated toward to the space captain, standing in a power pose, angling herself in his direction as to show dominance. "Captain Lars, welcome to the *Pascal Magi*. The captain would like to meet you inside. She is looking forward to it."

Lars acknowledged what she said and responded humbly. He stood in his own assertive pose. "I am too, as learning about this ship is our primary responsibility as Earth's emissaries."

Treading inside, Lars could hear the cackles of Mashu and Manatsu. Clio's blue eyes glanced around the corner. Her shiny, silver hair was tied back. The indoor light bounced off her creamy skin. Her actions were consistent with her behavior as a "player." After all, she had numerous girls clamoring for her, iterally. She enjoyed teasing and flirting with those on the ship, including Nanaha's stepbrother, Hyousake. A few rooms away, Tsubasa groaned. In the past, she had outwardly shown a latent hostility toward men. It ended up being a facade to act

stronger in front of them. She had confessed, previously, that she *adored* Hyousake. She stood firm and told Nanaha about the arrival of the mysterious space captain onto the vessel and the imminent meeting with him.

"Captain. The individual named Lars Barriga, and his crew, have entered the stern. He is currently walking down the hallway toward the command center."

Nanaha nodded. She made her beliefs plain about what needed to be done, tensely twirling her brown hair with her hand. "Good, good. We need to impress this person. Show off our arsenal of armaments. Once they realize what we can do, we will be on more even terms."

Tsubasa, thoughtful of the captain's appeal, grinned and retorted in turn. "I can't agree more, captain. I'll be sure to direct them to the command center. Aye, shorty!"

Continuing to be led through the ship, Lars observed people such as the dark brown-haired, brown-eyed, and pale-skinned Sango. She headed the engine room. He saw the brown-haired, brown-eyed, and medium white-skinned systems engineer Hyousuke, muddling about. He was scurrying from room to room. The ship gave the impression of being relatively active, which he took as a good (and *promising*) sign about its organization and structure.

Before he knew it, he entered the command center. Tanya exited and shut the door behind her. The massive room was illuminated by the targeting computers and digital screens. Nanaha advanced as the room brightened with light, chortling in delight at the machines in front of her. "Welcome, Captain Lars, to the command center of the *Pascal Magi*. I hope you appreciate your stay on our delightful ship."

Lars bowed deferentially and raised his head up, keeping his hands on his hips. "I am sure, I will…Captain...Nanaha…if I remember your name right."

Reasserting her authority, Nanaha had a strong retort as she assertively postured toward him. "Yes, you got it right. This craft has awesome firepower to obliterate enemies and…"

Lars interrupted her and took a more conciliatory tone, staring at her dark blue eyes directly. He stepped nearby. "Yeah, yeah, I get *all that*. I saw the armaments from the sky. What about this world? Is it fully covered by oceans? Are there landmasses? That's the type of information I'd like to know. Me and my compatriots are not warriors. We are envoys from a planet called Earth on a mission to connect with other peoples across the universe."

Itching her nose and twitching, Nanaha ambled back. Often assured in her captain's uniform, with its dark blue skirt and white formal shirt with gold highlights, she was at a loss for words. The fight she had expected appeared to be an impossibility. She mumbled nervously. "Uhh…I-I-I-don't know what to tell you, mister…unless a history lesson or something *would be better*. I thought you were here for a *different reason*."

Lars had a deep and penetrating belly laugh, snickering so noisily it echoed, bouncing from wall to wall. As he responded to her muddled mess of words, his grin lit up the room. It couldn't match the power of the electric lights which illuminated the ship's interior rooms, however. "Miss, I'm interested, simply put, in what is transpiring on this planet, as are my friends, Pappy, Rhodo-nite, and RT. We just came from somewhere completely covered by

water, no land masses, with people floating on a gigantic city across the waves. Is it the same here?"

Breathing deeply, Nanaha realized she had to answer his questions. She realized that unlike herself and most of those on the planet, he didn't intend to participate, or engage, in conflict. She guessed, *incorrectly*, that he nor his crew went on dangerous missions resembling those the *Pascal Magi* had undertaken in recent years, involving the loss of life and limb time and time again, putting a psychological toll on her. Due to this, she felt reassured by his comment. She elucidated on the Grand Roar to him, how it had dramatically changed the world's climate and human behaviors. Lars understood what she was saying. But he still had further questions. "A world-changing storm…that's fascinating. You *didn't reply* to my question about the existence of landmasses on this planet, though. In any case, did humans make this storm you speak of or did it come about naturally?"

Not desiring to let down the space captain, Nanaha sighed. She realized that the *only way* to stop his questions would be to be completely straight with him. Putting her hands on her hips, she leaned in toward him, trying to quash his query, like a flying gnat, the best she could.

"Starting with the landmasses, the Grand Roar mainly affected those in the eastern part of the world, what we call Asia, so continents and areas above water *exist*. When me and my fellow sailors tried to thwart a plan to generate a second cyclone, formed by those corporate scum who desired to use it for their own narrow benefit, we learned that the original one had come about the same way, a disgusting comment on the state of humanity! Sadly, they got away with it and those pesky pirates *continue* to plague the seas."

Lars comprehended her words carefully. He proceeded to pace in her direction and communicated with her in a booming voice, occasionally touching his hair and uniform. Perhaps he was a bit nervous. "There are similar conflicts on my home planet of Earth. My friend Steven and his friends are trying to ensure that what you described doesn’t occur there. They recently fashioned a new world organ called the World Parliamentary Assembly to accomplish those goals. I remain enthusiastic and cautiously optimistic about their progress."

Nanaha nodded and expressed her gratitude for Lars coming aboard. Realizing he wouldn't try to hurt her or the shipmates, she decided to bring him on a tour. She also offered that his friends could come along with him, which he considered as a possibility. They strolled down the hallway, with Nanaha leading the way. She passed by the shared bedroom with her stepbrother, Hyousake, quickly, thinking that Lars would not notice. It didn't work. He took note of it. "Uh, what's this sign say? Is it your personal quarters, Ms. Misaki? Why’s another name listed there below yours?"

Squirming and dragging Lars away, she tried to push it off as nothing. The door quickly opened. Both were thrown inside. Lars fell right on her chest and his hands held onto her breasts. Noticing this, she raised herself from the floor defiantly, ready to smack him. He remained apologetic, lying on the slick surface, not sure how he would defend himself. "I'm so sorry, Ms. Misaki. I didn't mean to…I touched you accidentally, *I swear*."

Rolling her eyes, she pulled him up from the floor and grumbled. She did not want to be flustered or feel weak. Unpredictably, a computer screen flickered on and began speaking, drawing Lars' eyes. Her cheeks got as red as a ripe tomato as she tried to shield herself from

shame. The character operating system on her desktop shouted "Hello!" It appeared to be a young girl with short hair and a cute dress, with a broom for "sweeping" unnecessary files away and doing maintenance. Lars giggled, enjoying the OS's personality.

"Miss, you don't have to be worried about this…my friend enjoys a show about talking vegetables which cry for some reason... and my other two acquaintances relish some old show about campers. You shouldn't be ashamed to have a character such as that on your desktop as your OS. I mean, it's cute and cool."

His response stunned her. No one on the ship had praised her for it in the past, so it made her extremely grateful. Rather than hugging him, she shook his hand, thanking him. Enjoying the moment, she heard a voice in the distance. She recognized it as her stepbrother. She murmured that he had to hide. He ran and rapidly slithered under her bed. Hyousake wore a fully grey uniform with a blue stripe on upper portion. His messy brown hair was draped over his head. He came inside the room. The door shut behind him soon thereafter. He hooted delightfully. "Hey, Nana-nee, how's the visit with that space captain going? I heard you were going to show him the command center."

Hesitating, she carefully trod toward him, not out to alert him to Lars' presence inside the cabin and believed she could tell him to leave quickly. If he discovered Lars, it could ruin *everything* about their relationship and her standing with the crew. That would not good. "Pretty good, Hyousake. I'm taking a break now. Why don't you get back to updating the ship's systems? I'll find you later, I can promise you that!"

Satisfied with that, he left the room, although he groused under his breath. He strode down the hallway, somewhat suspicious of his stepsister. Despite that, he trusted her judgment as a commander and as a friend. Sliding out from under her bed, Lars revealed himself. In an expression of complete amazement, he asked Nanaha about Hyousake. "Uh…who was that man? It appears strange you both sleep in the same room."

Panicky once again and shaking, she replied to him. She didn't want to mince words on such an important topic. Holding her ground on something like this could allow her to maintain her authority and learn something from the space captain, maybe. "…he is a software engineer on board and *my stepbrother*. I grew up with him. We both appreciate each other and he's basically…family."

Lars bobbed his head, understanding her completely. He tried to reassure her that he intended no harm in querying about such a personal matter. He usually wouldn't ask someone about it. "That makes sense. I didn't want to pry. I am only curious about it, that's all. I'm not always good with social relations myself, so learning more about how people talk to one another and how they are related, aides me in my personal self-improvement as a person."

Lars then bowed and continued. "So, thank you for sharing that with me…Now, let's tour the rest of the *Pascal Magi*, captain." She was happy to oblige his request.

Chapter 2: Kipo and Glimmer's Romantic Awkwardness and Adjusting to a New World

Chapter Summary

Kipo and Glimmer are getting closer, but one day, when Benson surprises them, they kiss one another, leading to further awkwardness. All the while, Glimmer still is adjusting to this new world and trying to figure out her relationship with Kipo, and friendships with everyone else.

Chapter Notes

I split this text from Chapter 1 to prepare this fic before I reposted it on Squidge World. When it was cross-posted there, the fic's text was revised to make it flow better.

Countless light-years away, Glimmer yawned, stretching her arms wide. She accidentally touched Kipo's spiky pale pink hair. Afraid of causing any discomfort, she rapidly withdrew her arm. Luckily for her, Kipo hadn't noticed. For no reason at all, other than her determination, she shot up in a manner resembling a bullet flying out of a gun and inched over to Glimmer.

"Good morning, sleepy head! Time to wake up! We have a lot to do today. More exploring of the surface, testing out *your powers*…oh, so much fun! Woohoo!"

Ignoring most of what Kipo had stated, the last part garnered her attention almost immediately. Rubbing her eyeballs, she gazed directly into Kipo's round magenta eyes. She didn't care much for roaming across the landscape. However, testing her newfound abilities excited her. She chirped with so much enthusiasm and vigor that it disconcerted her new compatriot. Her hands moved through the air as her speech began to become more animated than her usual self.

"I'd *really* enjoy doing that! I'm not on my home planet and I'm *so far* from the moonstone I once used as the source of this new energy, force, or strength, whatever you call it."

Kipo had no idea what Glimmer was talking about. She tried to remain cool and considerate. No one on this planet had *any* knowledge of magic. Sure, there had been colossal changes through mutations, but those came about due to human error and science gone wrong, not through anything mystical and inherent about the environment itself. She excitedly

approached her new friend whose multicolored hair resembled the look of cotton candy to her.

She giggled and blurted out words, unable to stop herself from disclosing something to a person she saw as pretty. How couldn't she say something? “Whether fate or another reason, Glimmer, I'm glad I met you. I…appreciate having another *cute person* around, so…I’m not the only one here."

Glimmer’s cheeks flushed with color, becoming as red as crushed up cherries. She apprehensively moved away from Kipo, hiding her head in her hands, her eyes pointed down, muttering to herself. Never encountering a situation approximating this, she supposed that acting in a loving manner would cause her to get out of this funk. She approached a trembling Glimmer, uttering in a hushed voice that she needed to *own* her adorable nature, and then delivered a peck on her cheek, with her consent, *of course*. Glimmer's face receded into its usual tanned color and she grinned, spinning around to encounter Kipo face-to-face.

"Thanks! I feel much better now. I'm cute and *I'm here to stay*!"

She wanted to return the favor, so she decided to smooch Kipo on the cheek. As she began to do so, Benson popped out from behind a bush and yelled "surprise!" His presence startled them both so much, their faces moved in opposite directions, with their lips meeting for a second in an unexpected embrace. Benson's mouth hung wide open, gawking at the spectacle before him. As Kipo and Glimmer walked back from each other, Benson had *some questions*.

He scratched his head. He was dumbfounded by what he had noticed between both of them. "What's that kiss about? You are coupling up *so fast*…I can tell…"

They both drew Benson in. They spoke in unison, unintentionally, right at his face. "It's not anything. Only an accident…that's all!"

Benson clearly didn't believe their explanation. To keep the peace, he accepted it for the *time being*. He could see the chemistry between them both, although he wasn't sure what would happen. As a gay person, he believed that his mind had constructed a 'gaydar' of sorts although he obviously didn't advertise this fact openly. Rather it was one of his secrets.

Soon thereafter, Wolf, Dave, Mandu, and Lio moved out of the thicket, encountering a dazed Glimmer, a bewildered Kipo, and a perplexed Benson. None had any idea about what had transpired in their absence. All of them prepared for their journey on the day to come, content to hear more from Glimmer. Wolf saw her as *an alien* from another planet. She was somewhat skeptical of her arrival there, believing she would do *more harm* than good.

Several hours passed. As they trekked across destroyed parts of the city, an enormous boom shook the terrain, giving Wolf, Benson, Dave, Mandu, Lio, and Kipo pause. Glimmer gulped a little herself, afraid of any beasts that lurked on the surface. Dragged behind an outcropping, she peeked out only to observe a giant eight-legged and five-eared gigantic grey and white-furred animal: a mega bunny. These mutes were protective of their offspring and not generally harming other mutated animals, alike most Mega Mutes. However, if you came across some animals, it could be dangerous.

If the scent of a Mega Bunny baby got on you, since the mother will pursue you, thinking you are one of her missing young. Glimmer gazed at the colossal creature in dread, shaking at the strangeness of this world. It was *so different* from Etheria. She wished she hadn't left through the portal, moving across the plains of space time, and arrived on the planet at all. As she worried, everyone huddled together, staying still until the Mega Bunny passed. No one would even attempt to venture out when the animal roamed close by. There was a high risk of being trampled or hurt in some way. With Scarlemagne dead, their group had to limit *any possible hazards* to the utmost extent possible.

The disappearance of the Mega Bunny into the distance relieved everyone. As the sun began to lower in the sky, morning metamorphosing into afternoon, Kipo recommended wandering into the woods to meet the Timbercats. The others acquiesced to this, believing it would be securer there than anywhere within the city, as the number of spots to hide in a desecrated landscape had dwindled due to the now-existent power vacuum in Las Vistas. Striding into the woods, Kipo heard some twigs crack. She ignored this and continued to move them forward, doubting the possibility of anyone confronting them. After all, who would aspire to fight puny humans for control of the surface? Kipo couldn't think of anyone. The snapping ceased. Blurry figures emerged. They fully came into focus, astonishing all the group's members.

The all-female mutants, Scooter Skunks, revved up the engines of their motorbikes, and began to surround them in a semi-circle. This nomadic group relied on vehicles powered by their own internal, and bodily, gases. They wore leather biker jackets with a glitzy style over sporty pink mini dresses. Their boots, helmets, aviator specs, and fingerless gloves completed the look. Each skunk had her own style, unique and retro, as some would describe it.

Kipo, Benson, Lio, Wolf, Dave, Mandu, and Glimmer formed a semi-circle to fend off a possible assault from these nomadic mutants. An unforeseen event changed the tables. Glimmer's staff attracted energy from a coronal mass ejection, exploding into space and releasing radiation into the planet's atmosphere, accompanying a solar flare. Combined with her own magic abilities, her staff had become a supercharged conducting rod, giving her an immense advantage over these pesky mutes. She began to hover a few feet in the air, above everyone's heads and closed her eyes. Concentrating all her strength on the rod, energy from it struck every single bike, blasting them into thousands of tiny pieces, sending the four skunks flying in all directions, while she hit adjoining trees. Stunned, the skunks scampered away in terror.

Glimmer, fatigued from this output of strength, fell from the sky, and into Kipo's arms. She beamed, giggling apprehensively at the situation. The sides of her face, usually lilac-colored, resembling her typical skin color, shifted to magenta, matching her eyes. Holding a friend, one she cherished and likely had a crush on, made her *uncomfortable*. Wolf, with her intuition, did not *fully* understand. Neither did Mandu or Dave. Since the latter two were non-humans, they could not recognize the whole gamut of human emotions. Benson, with his supposed "gaydar," understood it a bit better, but only a little, especially since he had seen Kipo and Glimmer kiss one another earlier that day.

Only Lio could fully identify the feelings, precisely because he had been in a romantic relationship himself. He thoughtfully spoke to her in his deep voice, hoping to garner a

response from her. “Kipo, it’s okay. Don't be afraid to express yourself. We…I won't judge. I've been through it before with your mother."

Shrugging her shoulders, Kipo wasn't sure what he referred to, so she decided to query him about it directly. Although she could have spoken softly, she addressed him openly and boldly. "Dad? What in Las Vistas are you talking about? I'm an open book."

Lio chuckled. He shuffled his feet in her direction. Although he worried because his own daughter did not recognize the subtext of his bland statement. He still saw her as a special person who could be extraordinary. Even so, he thought that inquiring about the lady who fell from the sky, as he called her, and the affections of his daughter related to this mystery woman who had come from a far-away planet.

He needed to supportive and encourage her. "It's *obvious*. I'm referring to Glimmer…it appears you have a *special bond* with her."

Kipo tensed up and fidgeted, slouching and simultaneously concealing her face from view. Stuttering, she struggled to come up with the words to articulate. Ideas bounded inside her brain, making it impossible for her to determine what would be the 'right' way to convey her emotions about Glimmer. As a result, her rejoinder sounded disjointed and disorganized. "Well…the thing is…Glimmer is…uh…dear to me as a lov-ely…friend! Yeah that's it!"

Lio accepted the 'clarification,' regardless of its incoherent nature. Benson, Wolf, and Dave were unconvinced, believing that Kipo was not telling them something. Perhaps, they surmised, Kipo had been flustered. Putting that aside, her friends continued to follow her lead, deeper into the woods, to meet the giant Timbercats. There was much more to this pack of mammals than cat lumberjacks who used axes, wore beanies and plaid flannel shirts. The latter gave them a hipster-ish style as some could call it. You could argue that these mutes were like the Mod Frogs, Umlaut Snakes, Newton Wolves, and Scooter Skunks because they acted in a humanoid in some ways.

Yumyan Hammerpaw's purple eyes spied a group of six shapes closing in. As the Timbercat leader, he had a duty to protect the community from any threats, a duty he took seriously. He picked up his one-sided carpenter’s hatchet with a wooden handle, red painted head, and a silver blade, wielding it defensively. He thought that he could intimidate these foes with his seven-foot height, loud noises, and strength, bravely fighting them off.

When the forms emerged from the thicket, he spotted Kipo and her friends. He withdrew his weapon, setting it on the ground. As he came to greet them, he saw her holding a young woman in her arms. "Kipo! It's great to see you again! What brings you 'round these parts?"

She halted in her tracks and gazed into his eyes, as she held tightly to Glimmer. Groaning, she pleaded with Yumyan for support her in this time of need. Since she had assisted the Timbercats before, she expected he and his fellow cats would aid her and her friend this time. "My friend…is exhausted…she *needs* to be cared for…and…the city has become dangerous since Scarlemagne got killed. Can *we stay here*…even for a little bit?"

Yumyan pondered her invitation. He itched his light gray beard, a part of his fur which was not highlighted with dark grey. Some of the fur follicles fell onto his light blue flannel shirt,

brushing them onto the ground with his hand. He remembered how she had supported his escape from the tree canopy, given him back his guitar, saved him (and his fellow compatriots) from being eaten by the Umlaut Snakes, and getting back the revered scratching tree from the Mega Monkey. He realized that fulfilling her entreaty for help would be the right thing to do.

"I accept your request. You can crash here for *a couple days*. Our doctors will examine your friend. Tomorrow, we can have a party to celebrate your arrival! We can all jam as one! Let's rest for now as the sun sets in the forest."

Kipo smiled. She was more than willing to get down and dirty, and jam alongside the 'cool' Timbercats. She hoped to have a hair-raising performance She had not realized that each of the speaking Mutes, like the Timbercats, had their own musical genre which distinguished them from others, with these genres forming their own subcultures. While Benson, Dave, Mandu, and Wolf were not as keen about staying there, Lio joyfully accepted it. He saw it as more secure than anywhere else. He trusted his daughter's judgment, as any good father would do. The Timbercats would undoubtedly accept his decision because the fellow mutes revered him on a level of near worship. Even Molly Yarnchopper, who had been a substitute leader for Yumyan when he vanished, who was more sensible than other Timbercats, fell in line with his dictate.

As the sunlight poured into the tree canopy and the birds began to sing, Glimmer awoke. Like she had the day before, she moved her arms out, eager to touch Kipo. Instead, one of her hands hit a hard-wooden surface. It stung with pain. She drew it back. Whipping her head around, she noticed that she was in a bed with flannel sheets and beddings. She was in the middle of a hollowed-out tree. This freaked her out. Sje shrieked, sticking her head out of non-covered hole of the tree cavity. Fear had taken over her very essence, numbing all her senses.

Instead of Kipo, the second-in-command of the Timbercats, Molly, entered. Her light blue eyes focused on a paralyzed Glimmer, with her dark blue flannel shirt, and white braided fur, shining in the daylight. After learning from Yumyan that Glimmer had arrived, she wanted to dispose of her, generally distrusting humans, despite Kipo's efforts. She had been convinced otherwise. A tough cookie, she would not fall prey to any cries for aid, especially from *someone* who had a humanoid form. Growling, she approached a frightened Glimmer.

"Lady, what are you hollering about? Despite my better judgment, no one is here to hurt you here…we are here to heal you…Kipo requested us to not touch a hair on your body."

Shocked by the entrance of the cat-like creature, she began to faint, about to fall back onto the bed. Kipo walked in. Her whole outfit sparkled unlike anything she had ever seen. Glimmer had perfected a new style at the store in the dilapidated town: a light-and-dark purple top with half sleeves, a black sleeveless shirt on top, light purple pantyhose, and dark green shorts on top of that. Her maroon boots sat on the ground, flanking the bed. She noticed something different: her old cape! She inched near, speaking in a nice, but aggrieved, tone to her new friend. "Kipo…*why* did you bring me here?...secondly, what are doing with that cape? *It's mine*!"

Rushing toward her, she began to hug Glimmer, something she begrudgingly assented to, realizing that nothing would stop Kipo. Tears ran down Kipo's face. She began bawling. Somehow, she made sense even through the non-stop crying. "When you become unconscious it *really* scared me. I lost my dad. I did not want to lose you *too*. I brought you here because I care about *you*. I know it might be scary. I get it. I had the same experience when coming onto the surface for the first time, after living underground for so long...as for the cape, it looked *so cute* on you, I had to try it on…*I love it*!...Glimmer, thanks for coming to this world. Your presence has already made my life *so much better*."

She put her arms around Kipo, weeping with joy that she had met such a caring person. Glimmer felt something clutch her tightly. Wary of the pink, hairy, and spotted arm, she tensed up, until she realized *it came from Kipo*. The cheery and contented face of her friend provided comfort. She went limp, letting herself be taken to a location in the tree canopy. To make herself feel safe, she shut her eyes, vowing to open them *only* when Kipo had stopped moving.

Kipo halted her running, planting her feet firmly on the ground. Glimmer followed, her eyes slowly exposed to the light, viewing a wonderful sight before her. Lio, Benson, Dave, Wolf, and Mandu were there, as were these the "big cats." Yumyan declared that the party, which was celebrating the arrival of Kipo and her friends, would begin immediately. He began to strum on his guitar, joined by Molly, singing songs of yore. Some tried to dance like Benson and Dave. Others used instruments the cats had shaped themselves. Lio and Kipo took up string instruments, and Mandu oinked. This whole scene stunned her and lifted her spirits. Maybe, this world would be right for her *after all*. Sure, it didn't resemble Etheria. *Did that matter?* She had new friends, ones who accepted her fully, not those which "betrayed" her, from her vantage point, or caused division. She attempted to serenade them about her times in Las Vistas:

This world is strange and weird/

It's better than what I feared/

I wish for the best/

Then I can move on to what's next/

Despite lyrics being, mostly, lackluster, this music number represented her first attempt at something of this sort. As such, she had put a good foot forward, something everyone appreciated. Her words continued to reverberate across the inside of the tree, with the twangs of guitars and banjos completing the sound. Glimmer had begun to see this planet as her home. She had a lot to learn. Such an exotic setting, for her, could give her a blank slate to *begin again*, washing away everything that happened on Etheria. She had no reason to remember (or *care about*) Bow, Angella, or any of the other Princesses, at least from her perspective, mainly because of the disunion caused by her planet's civil war.

Those on Etheria, thousands of light-years away, had no way to reach her due to Apta's destruction of the portal. Time and space were undoubtedly interlinked due to the existence of continuous space-time, meaning that large energy fluctuation could occur at small scales. Glimmer had tapped into the latter. Although Bow and Angella would have liked for Apta to

help them bridge this divide, so they could bring Glimmer *back* to Etheria, she refused to so. These were things that Glimmer could care less about.

Whether space-time had four-dimensions or five-dimensions, whether stars in the sky were fixed or moving, whether space-time had curved or flat edges didn't concern her. Instead, she'd rather have stability and *better friends*, even if that involved some uneasiness with Kipo, with a friendship, or something more, developing between them. That's what really matters to her, not these nerdy science concepts. She could be free of all. In some ways, the choice to leave Etheria paralleled Adora's, who left to live on Earth with Pearl and the Crystal Gems, although Glimmer *didn't select* the world she ended up on.

Chapter 3: Etheria in Crisis: Catra, Entrapta, Preservation, and Dimensional Portals

Chapter Summary

Catra begins doing experiments with Entrapta, after she was somehow freed from her life imprisonment in the Northern Reach, while the Compact of Etheria continues to fall apart, the planetary archives hums along, and Catra enters a portal which leads her off Etheria and to... another planet.

Chapter Notes

Like the last chapter, I split this off in preparation for posting this on Squidge World. When cross-posting it there I revised the text and made it flow-better, replacing the original flawed text.

Catra twisted a lever, causing the machine to whir and whine to life with a rumble. Giggling with excitement, Apta's magenta eyes gazed at the contraption with amazement and wonder. Could this be, she questioned herself, *the answer* to quantum entanglement? Could she generate holes through space time which didn't cause time dilation, with time moving slower when you move faster or when gravity increases? She longed for a portal which wouldn't cause time and space distortions, whether around massive objects because of gravitational force or the curvature of space-time caused by distribution of the mass.

She saw Catra as the perfect subject, dragging Catra's body toward herself using multiple fronds of her prehensile hair. "Oh, Catra, I appreciate you coming. I couldn't have an experiment without *a specimen*."

Catra growled and tried to scratch away. Apta wagged her hair like a finger, exclaiming she was acting like a "naughty girl." She promised to not hurt Catra, withdrawing her prehensile hair. Turning her back to Apta, she began walking up the stairs. She then heard words from Apta that abruptly changed her mind, causing her to spin around and face Apta. She sat down, her legs straddling the steps, and crossed her arms, listening intently to what she had to say.

"I wouldn't go away yet…I can bring you *back to Adora*…you still fancy her, *right*? I'm getting better at these social situations, so I recognize *that type of stuff* now."

Catra turned up her eyebrows one at a time, unsure what Apta meant. Hadn't Adora left Etheria all those months ago and disappeared? She remembered hearing that the only remaining portal had been destroyed. The possibility of meeting her again seemed like a pipe dream. She continued to fold her arms, sauntering back down the stairs toward Apta.

"What in the world do you mean? She left Etheria! How could I even find her again? I have so much to tell her…I *need* closure."

Apta cackled. She recognized the challenge of explaining it Catra. This experiment, if it succeeded, could break new ground for her and for the universe, possibly allowing hyperspace treks across the stars. It would be revolutionary in many ways. "Oh, my good Catra, particles in the universe can be bound together even if each one is on an opposite side of the universe. Space-time *can be manipulated* to our ends for…"

Catra glanced at Apta like she had three heads, taking her words as gobbledygook and occupying space needlessly. She yelled, insisting on a clarification before going ahead. "Huh? Please describe it *more simply*. I don't get it…"

She exhaled, annoyed by the request. She reasoned that her description could help Catra realize the importance of this apparatus. Apta saw Catra as a test subject for research on the space-time continuum, boundaries of space-time, and testing whether rapid space voyages could allow journeys through time itself. Apta twirled her hair enthusiastically. "Two points in the universe *can be linked together* no matter how far apart they are, a phenomenon known as quantum nonlocality. The same is the case for curves within space and time, linking different events or locations. My portal would allow you to speed through the stars and arrive on Earth where Adora is living. I haven't…"

Catra jumped up with a huge smirk on her face. She *knew* there would be risks in using Apta's contraption. On the other hand, if it ended up being successful, she could leave her problems on Etheria behind. She could reset her life alike Adora when she arrived on Earth or Glimmer in Las Vistas. A new beginning sounded fantastic to her, more than anything else. "I'll do it! Let's begin this already. Onward to Adora!"

Apta shrugged, not feeling right about Catra's decision. Sure, she aspired to test her tech. Was hurting someone *worth the cost*? Her past actions had caused harm to those on Etheria. She hadn't even tested the device. The ramifications scared her. Catra's plea frightened her, causing her to acquiesce without a fuss. Witnessing her subject as haughty and consumed by ego, she didn't bother to mention that space-time can be warped by gravity, rumble and wobble, or be chunky. She flipped the switch, telling Catra to step forward, which she did so, gleefully. A blue glow surrounded her, sucking her into a wormhole, closing in a rapid flash of light. Apta gazed at the computer monitor and the results fascinated her. *It worked*! Possibly the same technology could be used on Etheria to move people from *one point to another.*

On the other side of the planet, in Mystacor, Bow, George, Lance, and Angella sat around a table within the Archives of Etheria. The archives had normal hours, from 9-5. They had a meal break usually lasting 30 minutes to an hour. Working all the time obviously would be draining. Breaks and pauses every few hours ensured all the archivists could serve the patrons of their institution without compromising themselves physically, emotionally, or

psychologically. George spoke first after chowing down on a raw beet and tomato sandwich. "Son, what do you think of the archives?...would *you* make any improvements?"

After eating his food, he pondered a response. He loved working with technology or using his bow and arrows in the Whispering Woods. Even so, he valued what Angella and his dads did there, so he aimed to be as honest as possible. Otherwise, how could the archives aid the people of Etheria? If it didn't adapt to the population's needs, effectively serving them, informing them about their past as to assist them in understanding the present and future, then *what purpose* did it have existing? Bow itched his head and replied humbly.

"Dad, I appreciate everything you do here…maybe you could *make it more interactive*, bring in more people, connect it to other institutions across Etheria…even lend out materials…it could bring more people in the doors."

Lance described sternly how they were not a library and why lending out fragile historical documents *wasn't* something they did, although you could read materials there, like a library. He noted that a library is a collection of published materials whether books, magazines, recordings, or other records, able to, normally, replace these resources. More accurately, their institution was a repository, where unique, rare, and irreplaceable records are maintained and stored. He described their archives as a place where records of enduring value are maintained, following principles such as collective control, original order, and provenance, on a permanent basis.

Furthermore, he believed that archivists could have materials of different worth to users, whether secondary, primary, or tertiary, documenting private and governmental transactions. He considered archives a place that preserved social memory. Angella and George thought of it the same way, knowing that the records served as *a form of documentary evidence* of the past which could be interpreted and recognized through countless perspectives. His clarification brushed away Bow's confusion like a person with a broom and dustpan sweeping a dirty floor. Even so, he insisted on improved interactivity, a goal which Lance, George, and Angella were all dedicated to in the days to come.

The archives sparkled in the morning light. You could see every nook and cranny, clean as a whistle. There was no mold, mildew, or dust. Despite what some thought about archives, it stood as a monument to progress and achievement, not a place hidden from public view in a basement. No one dared confuse it with a library without getting a mouthful from Lance, George, and occasionally Angella. Some of the Horde's former members worked in the archives. Other individuals worked in newly-established civil service positions since the Compact of Etheria *no longer applied* to the planet and its inhabitants. This included Rogelio, Kyle, Octavia, Scorpia, and Lonnie, among a few others. The former Horde members were watched and assisted in their reintegration back into society, paying penance for their crimes by remaking the planet in the Etherian people's image.

Angella, George, and Lance breathed in, beginning a chant as they walked back to work:

We're here!

We're archivists!

Get used to it!

Bow cheered, proud of his dads and the rest of the planet for pulling out of the civil war. Sure, the archives wasn't visible unless you entered Mystacor, but its presence there meant the sorcerers *could protect it* from any outside attack. Such a former royal realm could be considered the securest place on Etheria itself. It was the perfect place for an archives. Someday, satellite branches could be created. For now, they worked with the current facility.

On the other side of Etheria, Fuma smelled the beautiful flowers in her garden, and pressed a red button on her tablet. She began recording. She had been doing vlogs for some time now. Beginning them made her a little nervous, as someone who was a gregarious introvert. She began speaking emphatically with her mouth and through her hand movements.

"Hello, everyone! Today I'm going to show you how to plant flowers. As you may know, I have the power to create plants…It's been a learning curve to planting stuff, but I enjoy it so, so much now! What you need is a few trowels, small shovels, tiny metal rakes to get out those pesky weeds, a bucket for dirt, and other related tools. Make sure to follow the instructions *correctly*, because if you dig the hole too deep or put the flowers too close, they will die…and that would be SO SAD! I couldn't bear it!"

Fuma stopped for a second and began sobbing, wiping the tears from her eyes. Even thinking about the fate of the plants made her miserable. She exhaled and then inhaled, calming herself, gazing up at the camera. She knew a mediation would be the next step. "Sorry about that, folks. Sometimes emotions *get the better of you*. In times like that, you cross your legs and arms, closing your eyes, letting your thoughts drift away, not thinking of anything, finding your heart center…realizing you are *only a small speck* in the infinite cosmos."

She sat there, deep in mediation, when Apta quietly tip-toed outside the door, up from her data center. As she prepared to start her journey to Mystacor, Fuma, whose senses were attuned to any sudden movement, felt the presence of another person in her vicinity. With her powers, she reached out telepathically with her mind, and grabbed Apta, drawing her closer. She used another plant-composed tendril to turn off the recording. “That's all, folks!" she declared.

Apta grumbled about Fuma entangling her. She only sought to report her findings to Bow, Lance, George, and Angella in Mystacor. Politely, Fuma plopped Apta next to her and asked about her plans. She admitted she wished to go to the archives speedily to report her new findings. Apta patted her on the pack. She began speaking softly and slowly. "Before your journey, would you like some tea? I have some brewing inside."

Apta's eyes lit up. She yelped happily at the suggestion. She put her arm around Fuma in a *friendly manner.* Coming toward the house, she gladly replied to her comrade. "I'd love to, Apta. Anything with you, my fine friend. Tea is my *favorite* beverage."

Fuma chuckled as they both stepped inside the house hand-in-hand. Unlike Spinnerella and Netossa, they had *no intention* of starting a romantic relationship. They were good friends, plain and simple, nothing more and nothing less. If they wanted to go down the path, moving from being friends to admirers, not much would have to change. However, neither Fuma nor Apta sought *any change* in their friendship now or in the future. They sipped tea sitting at a

table across from each other, watching events outside the window. Like those across the planet, Fuma and Apta were at peace with themselves and the world.

Chapter 4: Catra's Bold Entrance and Adora's Dilemma

Chapter Summary

Pearl and Adora are riding a motorcycle together through Empire City when someone they were never expecting shows up: Catra. She pledges to do better and regain Adora's trust. Can she really be trusted? Or is this just a trick?... only time will tell.

Chapter Notes

Like the last chapter, I split this off in preparation for posting this on Squidge World. This chapter concludes this fic, and sets the stage for what's to come next in this series. When posting it on Squidge World, I revised the text, making it flow better, and added italics in some key places, among other changes.

Light years away, Pearl and Adora rode a motorcycle together through the semi-crowded streets of Empire City. Unlike elsewhere in the universe, everything on Earth *seemed to be peaceful*. The World Parliamentary Assembly had begun meeting regularly. Different regions of the world had adopted their own currencies and were working together on common matters. No more of those wretched candy settlements had popped up. Only one remained in Yokohama and was under high surveillance as to prevent any contamination of the neighboring town and its inhabitants.

Steven and the other Crystal Gems were working hard to pacify the world. Lapis, Peri, Anthy, and Utena were living in Miura, Japan. Carmen and Julia continued to reside in Tokyo. Something appeared to be different about each of them, although neither Pearl nor Adora could figure it out. Their physiology had altered a tad. As she enjoyed her vacation with Pearl to some of the world’s best places, she did not think about any of those people, trying to enjoy herself in a way she could have never experienced on Etheria. Something unanticipated happened, ruining the peace and quiet that the trip had provided up to *this point.*

A portal appeared in front of them. A bright blue light from the portal illuminated their faces and temporarily blinded them. As their motorcycle skidded to a stop, the space-time gateway closed. The outline of a body shape appeared in the smoke. It reminded Adora of someone. When the air cleared, she saw a slim form, with a sharp chin, upright nose, and two sloped eyes in shades of turquoise (on the right) and pale yellow (on the left). Her crooked eyebrows, fanged teeth, catlike ears, and other feline features stood out. She marched toward Adora in a confrontational manner. She uttering her famed (or infamous?) catchphrase. "Hey, Adora."

Her presence left Adora speechless. Catra was the *last person* she wanted to set her eyes on due to her horrible acts she committed on Etheria. Her presence on Earth made her feel *uneasy*. She told Pearl to stand back and bellowed at Catra from the top of her lungs, her voice echoing across the city. It reverberated from building to building, tower to tower, bridge to bridge, car to car, train to train, so loud that it appeared that everyone could hear her.

"Why are you here, Catra? You should *go back* to Etheria. I have my own life, free from any of the conflicts there. I have *a girlfriend* and a job to keep this new home safe. *Go home*."

Catra expected that Adora would not understand. She could not make her forget all the awful things she had done out of spite, or how she had lashed out toward her. She could not reverse the past, although she thought that talking to Adora could assist her in moving on, giving her closure *she desperately needed*. Otherwise, she would be mentally trapped in her own matrix. She would have continued to haunted by all the destruction she had caused on Etheria.

"Adora, you might not understand why I am here…but Etheria has changed since you left… everything is going swell there. The civil war has ended and peace reigns over the land. I could be *a happy, obedient citizen* like my former buds from the Horde. I had a sense something was missing…and that thing was *you*, Adora. I came here to *be with you*. I'll do *whatever it takes* to gain your trust again. After spending time in that prison in the Northern Reach, I began to reflect on my life choices. That's why I came here…to make up *with you*."

Catra's words took Adora aback. What could she do now? She had deep emotional ties with Pearl. Abandoning her would be *out of the question*. She did not know if Catra could be trusted after everything she had been through. Scampering toward Pearl, Adora discussed with her what she should do next. Catra remained immobile, standing on the desolate city street, awaiting a reply.

End Notes

The same sources I used for spacetime/space-time for the previous narrative are also consulted in this one. My hope was that I could subvert the original purpose of Tactical Roar as propaganda for the Japanese military with this story. That was the idea, anyway. Also, making this story opens up that fandom for others to write their own story. Taking information from the Wikipedia page for Tactical Roar, Anime News Network page, translated from the official website, a translated page on specific words, translated page on weapons and mecha, and photographs of characters. Also the Animanga fandom page for Tactical Roar provided some information too, as did MacMillan's "Parts of boats and ships" page and elements from episodes 1-13 of Tactical Roar in this story, summarized elsewhere.

One user on social media told me that when I'm writing my dialogue to consider "some physical movement for your characters" like people fidgeting, moving things around, scratching their noses, as adding these "little touches" can make the characters "seem more real." I tried to incorporate here. The fandom pages for Catra, Kipo Oak, Mega Bunny, Scooter Skunks, Timbercats, Yumyan Hammerpaw, Molly Yarnchopper, and Glimmer were helpful for details in this story.

Works inspired by this one

Rise of the Scarlet Wildcat by lefemmerouge

Please drop by the Archive and comment to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!